

(St. Luke's) Palm Sunday/Sunday of the Passion/Confirmation: April 9, 2017
"Forever in Community"

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

As we prepare to walk through this most holy of weeks, we wonderfully begin today with Palm Sunday, and what better day for confirmation. This service encapsulates the eccentricity of life. There is joy, there is plotting, there is anxiety, there is pain, there is sadness, there is death; and through it all there is Jesus, there is hope, there is eternal life.

This day began with shouts of joy, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" The service quickly turns to the more serious matters, the work, the enduring, the sacrifice of the Son of David. Dear brothers and sisters, is this not us as well? We joyously shout, sing, and give thanks to our God. We, stand today, gathering around His word and sacraments. We have several young people who will be standing in the presence of the God and in front of this congregation to boldly and joyfully confess their faith in the Triune God. It is a day for rejoicing. Glory to God in the highest!

Then, life will happen. The trials of school, the anxiety of health, the struggle with family and friends, the devil, the world, and the sinful nature will cause the newness and the shininess of this bold confession to become dull. When the storms of life come, when the crowds turn from "Hosanna" to "Crucify Him," when the faithful experience the world outside of these walls, where does one turn? The cry goes up, "How long, O Lord. I made promises. I am your child. Why do these things keep happening? Are you listening? Do you even care?"

Brothers and sisters in Christ, the time of confirmation instruction is really like boot camp. The very basics are given. In this sin-filled and pain torn world, this is precisely for the walking through of this Holy Week. For the Christian, every week is essentially designed around this week. Every week mirrors this week. We do well to pattern every week off of this one.

Sunday is filled with joy as we gather around His Word and Sacrament for life. As we walk through the week, spend some time this coming week to read through the Gospels, and focus on the time of Jesus' last week. What does Jesus teach during the days from Palm Sunday to His betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion? He experiences

the full gamut of emotions. As He does this and teaches, He is in the temple surrounded with His disciples. He eats the Last Supper. He dies. He is buried and He is resurrected. Talk about a busy week. And through it all, He remains ever grounded, connected, to the very places on earth where God's Word is read, taught, and proclaimed. His disciples, as they experience this week with Jesus, are right there in God's Word as well. After the resurrection, we learn in Acts 2 that this continued to be the pattern of the disciples worship and life. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."¹

We can learn from their example, they would experience many hardships, persecutions, and face death, just like Jesus. The only thing that kept them bold and courageous, was their faith. And what kept their faith strong? The Lord. They were in constant contact, remained in the vine, in the places where God's Word was taught and proclaimed. They did so with fellow believers. There was a community of believers who fed from God's Word together, strengthened each other, bore one another's burdens in love, feasted on the Lord of Life, and prayed for one another. It was fellowship and community with the Lord through word and sacrament, and that flowed in fellowship and community, in love towards one another.

This life is hard, and my sin makes it even harder. I sin. I disobey God, and I hurt you. I can only beg for forgiveness and pray that you will be merciful. God is merciful and here we receive His mercy. "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."²

As you walk through this communal life together, I encourage you.

Jesus has defeated death and hell, and gives us that victory through Word and Sacrament, so we can boldly proclaim, Connor, "For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy."³

¹ Acts 2:42

² Matthew 11:28

³ Psalm 92:4

When trials and tribulations come, and I don't know where to turn, Austin, "For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you."⁴

As you receive His grace, He establishes You and thus with His Hands, Kiana, "Fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you."⁵

What has He done for you! He has created, He sustains, He redeems, and He sanctifies. He is love and this love was shown as He gave His life on the cross. This love is washed over you. This love is proclaimed through His Holy Absolution. His love is given to you as you eat and drink to receive the fruits of His sacrifice. This is God's great love, and so wherever you go when you leave these doors, whatever the devil, the world, and my own sinful flesh can throw at me, God's voice rings loudly, Kailey, "So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."⁶

"Lamb of God, pure and holy,
 Who on the cross didst suffer,
 Ever patient and lowly,
 Thyself to scorn didst offer.
 All sins Thou borest for us,
 Else had despair reigned o'er us:
 Thy peace be with us, O Jesus! O Jesus!"⁷ Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

⁴ Psalm 86:5

⁵ 1 Samuel 12:24

⁶ 1 Corinthians 13:13

⁷ LSB 434 Lamb of God, Pure and Holy: Stanza 3